



News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 32nd Congressional District of California

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SOLIS NAMED A CONFEREES TO THE ENERGY BILL; **Conferees Begin Negotiations**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (CA-32), a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and Ranking Democrat on the Environment and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee, was named today to the Energy Bill conference committee. Solis was elected by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (CA-8) to serve as one of seven Democrats from the Energy and Commerce Committee on the bicameral conference committee on the comprehensive Energy Bill. Eleven Energy and Commerce Republicans were also chosen.

"I am honored to be in a position to help ensure that communities in East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley benefit from an energy bill which will not only guarantee reliable energy sources and decrease gas prices, but will guarantee safe drinking water, protect public health and ensure a strong role for our communities and states," said Solis. "The House passed bill fails to meet these objectives, and I hope this process provides an opportunity for Congress to deliver America the energy policy it deserves."

The House passed energy bill, H.R. 6, includes several provisions which are detrimental for California. These provisions would:

- Prevent California from having a role in the approving of liquefied natural gas terminals;
- Allow refineries to be sited in most of California and strips communities of all local siting and oversight authority;
- Make water providers and consumers pay for contamination from MTBE manufacturers;
- Require Californians to purchase ethanol from Midwest manufactures which could result in a gas price increase of 8 cents; and
- Preempt California's appliance efficiency standards.

Negotiations began today with opening statements from Senators and Representatives and Member meetings are expected to proceed for the next several weeks. Several contentious issues must be reconciled, including the House passed liability shield for the manufacturers of MTBE and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Below is Congresswoman Solis' opening statement.

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“Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am honored to join my colleagues as a member of this Conference. I hope we are able to work in a cooperative, transparent manner as we undertake the difficult task of resolving the many differences between the House and Senate passed bills. I believe that it is imperative that through our efforts we craft a long term energy bill which will not only guarantee reliable energy sources but will guarantee safe drinking water, protect public health and ensure a role for our communities and states in the siting and oversight of new energy facilities.

“As written the House passed bill does not help us reach this goal. I am particularly concerned about several provisions which would not result in more reliable energy supplies, but rather would contaminate more water supplies, disadvantage vulnerable communities and strip our states and communities of their rights.

“Provisions in the House passed bill would disadvantage low-income and poor populations in more than 1,200 counties by allowing refineries to be sited with no local enforcement or oversight powers and with weakened regulations. Many of these communities are already disproportionately disadvantaged by environmental toxins. I find this language to be egregious, especially considering the commitment of both Chambers to protecting the Executive Order on Environmental Justice, which I would argue this language violates. I hope that through this process, we can work to protect environmental justice communities.

“State authority on the siting of liquefied natural gas facilities is also revoked under the House passed legislation. These provisions exclude the valuable opinion of local officials in the decision of where to locate new facilities. While Members may disagree on the role of liquefied natural gas in our nation’s energy portfolio, I believe that our communities, fire departments, police departments and first responders deserve a right to be active participants in these decisions. I hope that through this process we can restore these rights to our communities.

“The House passed legislation also threatens our water supplies. Not only does it include a liability waiver for MTBE, leaving our communities to foot the bill for cleanup, but the House passed bill includes language which would require California to weaken its existing laws protecting underground sources of water from leaking tanks or it will lose its federal funding. I believe that while federal minimum standards may be an interesting goal to discuss, that we should not be penalizing our states for taking steps more aggressive actions to prevent leaks.

“Finally, I would like to point out that the House passed legislation does NOT help consumers combat the high price of gasoline at the pump which I find disturbing.

“Once again, I would like to thank my colleagues for allowing me the opportunity to be a part of this Conference and hope that we can work together in an open and transparent process for both Members and our staffs to achieve an energy policy worth of the 21st century.

“I hope this process, is an open and transparent process for both Members and our staffs of which we can all be proud of. Thank you.”